

Rosicrucianism



The Temple of the Rose Cross, *Teophilus Schweighardt Constantiens*, 1618.

Rosicrucianism is a philosophical secret society said to have been founded in late medieval Germany by **Christian Rosenkreuz**. It holds a doctrine or theology “built on esoteric truths of the ancient past”, which, “concealed from the average man, provide insight into nature, the physical universe and the spiritual realm.”^[1] Rosicrucianism is symbolized by the **Rosy Cross**.

Between 1607 and 1616, two anonymous manifestos were published, first in Germany and later throughout Europe.^[2] These were the *Fama Fraternitatis RC* (*The Fame of the Brotherhood of RC*) and the *Confessio Fraternitatis* (*The Confession of the Brotherhood of RC*). The influence of these documents, presenting a “most laudable Order” of mystic-philosopher-doctors and promoting a “Universal Reformation of Mankind”, gave rise to an enthusiasm called by its historian Dame Frances Yates the “Rosicrucian Enlightenment”.^[3]

Rosicrucianism was associated with **Protestantism** (**Lutheranism** in particular),^[4] and the manifestos opposed **Roman Catholicism** and its preference for **dogma** over **empiricism**. They traced their philosophy and science to the **Moors**, asserting that it had been kept secret for 120 years until the intellectual climate might receive it.

Early seventeenth-century occult philosophers such as **Michael Maier**, **Robert Fludd** and **Thomas Vaughan** interested themselves in the Rosicrucian world view.^[3] According to historian David Stevenson it was also influential to **Freemasonry** as it was emerging in **Scotland**.^[4] In later centuries, many **esoteric** societies have claimed to derive their doctrines, in whole or in part, from the original Rosicrucians. Several modern societies have been formed for the study of Rosicrucianism and allied subjects.

1 Origins

The *Fama Fraternitatis* presented the legend of a German doctor and mystic philosopher referred to as “Frater C.R.C.” (later identified in a third manifesto as **Christian Rosenkreuz**, or “Rose-cross”). The year 1378 is presented as being the birth year of “our Christian Father”, and it is stated that he lived 106 years. After studying in the Middle East under various masters, possibly adhering to **Sufism**,^[5] he was unable to spread the knowledge he had acquired to any prominent European figures. Instead, he gathered a small circle of friends/disciples and founded the Rosicrucian Order (this can be deduced to have occurred around 1407).

During Rosenkreuz’s lifetime, the Order was said to consist of no more than eight members, each a doctor and a sworn bachelor. Each member undertook an oath to heal the sick without payment, to maintain a secret fellowship, and to find a replacement for himself before he died. Three such generations had supposedly passed between c.1500 and c.1600, a time when scientific, philosophical and religious freedom had grown so that the public might benefit from the Rosicrucians’ knowledge, so that they were now seeking good men.^[6]

2 Reception

The manifestos were and are not taken literally by many but rather regarded either as **hoaxes** or as **allegorical** statements. The manifestos directly state: “We speak unto you by parables, but would willingly bring you to the right, simple, easy, and ingenuous exposition, understanding, declaration, and knowledge of all secrets.”

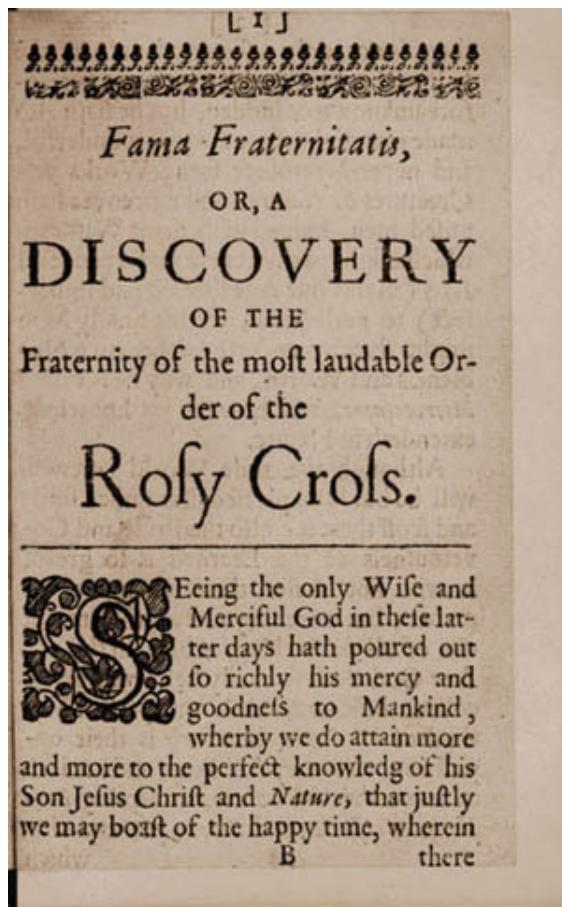
It is evident that the first Rosicrucian manifesto was influenced by the work of the respected hermetic philoso-

pher Heinrich Khunrath, of Hamburg, author of the *Amphiteatrum Sapientiae Aeternae* (1609), who was in turn influenced by John Dee, author of the *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1564). The invitation to the royal wedding in the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* opens with Dee's philosophical key, the *Monas Hieroglyphica* symbol. The writer also claimed the brotherhood possessed a book that resembled the works of Paracelsus.

Some say the writers were moral and religious reformers. They used the techniques of chemistry (alchemy) and of the sciences generally as media through which to publicize their opinions and beliefs.

In his autobiography, Johann Valentin Andreae (1586–1654) claimed the anonymously published *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* as one of his works, and he subsequently described it as a *ludibrium*. In his later works, he makes alchemy an object of ridicule and places it along with music, art, theater and astrology in the category of less serious sciences. According to some sources, his role in the origin of the Rosicrucian legend is controversial.^[7] However, it was generally accepted according to others.^[8]

3 The Rosicrucian Enlightenment



The publication of the *Fama Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis* (1614)

In the early 17th century, the manifestos caused excitement throughout Europe by declaring the existence of a secret brotherhood of alchemists and sages who were preparing to transform the arts, sciences, religion, and political and intellectual landscape of Europe. Wars of politics and religion ravaged the continent. The works were re-issued several times, followed by numerous pamphlets, favorable or otherwise. Between 1614 and 1620, about 400 manuscripts and books were published which discussed the Rosicrucian documents.

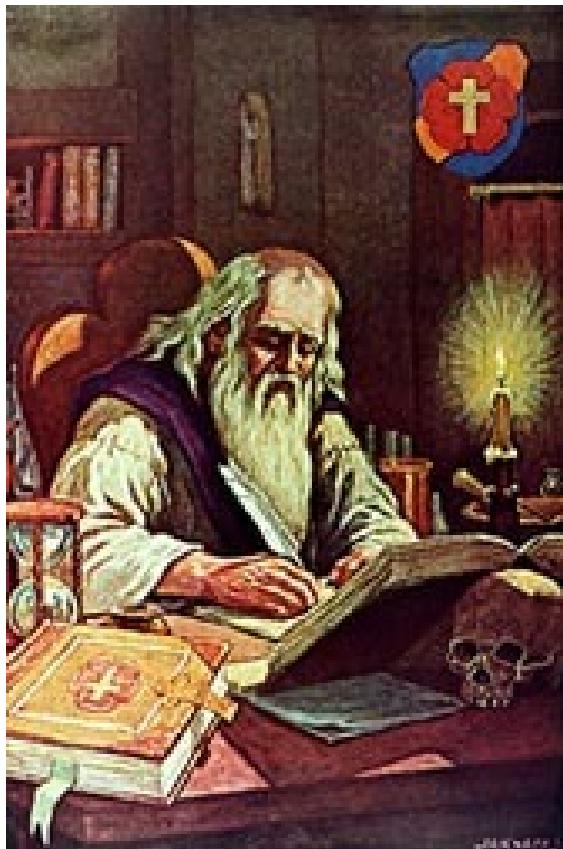
The peak of the “Rosiocrucianism furor” was reached when two mysterious posters appeared on the walls of Paris in 1622 within a few days of each other. The first said, “We, the Deputies of the Higher College of the Rose-Croix, do make our stay, visibly and invisibly, in this city (...)” and the second one ended with the words “The thoughts attached to the real desire of the seeker will lead us to him and him to us.”^[9]

The legend inspired a variety of works, among them the works of Michael Maier (1568–1622) of Germany; Robert Fludd (1574–1637) and Elias Ashmole (1617–1692) of England; Teophilus Schweighardt Constantiens, Gotthardus Arthusius, Julius Sperber, Henricus Madathanus, Gabriel Naudé, Thomas Vaughan and others.^[10] In Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (1650) he defends the Rosicrucians. Some later works impacting Rosicrucianism were the *Opus magocabalisticum et theosophicum* by George von Welling (1719)—of alchemical and paracelsian inspiration—and the *Aureum Vellus oder Goldenes Vliess* by Hermann Fictuld in 1749.

Michael Maier was appointed *Pfalzgraf* (Count Palatine) by Rudolf II, Emperor and King of Hungary and King of Bohemia. He also was one of the most prominent defenders of the Rosicrucians, clearly transmitting details about the “Brothers of the Rose Cross” in his writings. Maier made the firm statement that the Brothers of R.C. exist to advance inspired arts and sciences, including alchemy. Researchers of Maier's writings point out that he never claimed to have produced gold, nor did Heinrich Khunrath or any of the other Rosicrucianists. Their writings point toward a symbolic and spiritual alchemy, rather than an operative one. In a combination of direct and veiled styles, these writings conveyed the nine stages of the involutive-evolutive transmutation of the *threefold body* of the human being, the *threefold soul* and the *threefold spirit*, among others esoteric knowledge related to the “Path of Initiation.”

In his 1618 pamphlet, *Pia et Utilissima Admonitio de Fratribus Rosae Crucis*, Heinrichus Neuhusius wrote that the Rosicrucians departed for the east due to European instability caused by the start of the Thirty Years' War. In 1710, Sigmund Richter, founder of the secret society of the Golden and Rosy Cross, also suggested the Rosicrucians had migrated eastward. In the first half of the 20th century, René Guénon, a researcher of the occult, presented

this same idea in some of his works.^[11] An eminent author of the 19th century, Arthur Edward Waite, presented arguments contradicting this idea.^[12] It was in this fertile field of discourse that many Rosicrucian societies arose. They were based on the occult, inspired by the mystery of this “College of Invisibles.”



Frater C.R.C. – Christian Rose Cross (symbolical representation)

The literary works of the 16th and 17th centuries were full of enigmatic passages containing references to the Rose Cross, as in the following (somewhat modernized):

For what we do presage is not in grosse,
For we are brethren of the Rosie Crosse;
We have the Mason Word and second sight,
Things for to come we can foretell aright.

— Henry Adamson, *The Muses' Threnodie*
(Perth, 1638).

The idea of such an order, exemplified by the network of astronomers, professors, mathematicians, and natural philosophers in 16th-century Europe promoted by such men as Johannes Kepler, Georg Joachim Rheticus, John Dee and Tycho Brahe, gave rise to the Invisible College. This was the precursor to the Royal Society founded in 1660.^[13] It was constituted by a group of scientists who began to hold regular meetings to share and develop knowledge acquired by experimental investigation. Among these were Robert Boyle, who wrote: “the cornerstones of the Invisible (or as they term themselves the

Philosophical) College, do now and then honour me with their company...”^[14] John Wilkins and John Wallis, who described those meetings in the following terms: “About the year 1645, while I lived in London (at a time when, by our civil wars, academical studies were much interrupted in both our Universities), ... I had the opportunity of being acquainted with divers worthy persons, inquisitive natural philosophy, and other parts of human learning; and particularly of what hath been called the New Philosophy or Experimental Philosophy. We did by agreements, divers of us, meet weekly in London on a certain day and hour, under a certain penalty, and a weekly contribution for the charge of experiments, with certain rules agreed amongst us, to treat and discourse of such affairs...”^[15]

4 Rose-Cross Degrees in Freemasonry



18° Knight of the Rose Croix jewel (from the Masonic Scottish Rite)

According to Jean Pierre Bayard,^[16] two Rosicrucian-inspired Masonic rites emerged towards the end of 18th century, the Rectified Scottish Rite, widespread in Central Europe where there was a strong presence of the “Golden and Rosy Cross”, and the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, first practised in France, in which the 18th

degree is called *Knight of the Rose Croix*.

The change from “operative” to “speculative” Masonry occurred between the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 18th century. Two of the earliest speculative Masons for whom a record of initiation exists were Sir Robert Moray and Elias Ashmole. Robert Vanloo states that earlier 17th century Rosicrucianism had a considerable influence on Anglo-Saxon Masonry. Hans Schick sees in the works of Comenius (1592–1670) the ideal of the newly born English Masonry before the foundation of the Grand Lodge in 1717. Comenius was in England during 1641.

The *Gold und Rosenkreuzer* (Golden and Rosy Cross) was founded by the alchemist Samuel Richter who in 1710 published *Die warhafte und vollkommene Bereitung des Philosophischen Steins der Brüderschaft aus dem Orden des Gülden-und Rosen-Creutes* (*The True and Complete Preparation of the Philosopher's Stone by the Brotherhood from the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross*) in Breslau under the pseudonym Sincerus Renatus^[17] in Prague in the early 18th century as a hierarchical secret society composed of internal circles, recognition signs and alchemy treatises. Under the leadership of Hermann Fictuld the group reformed itself extensively in 1767 and again in 1777 because of political pressure. Its members claimed that the leaders of the Rosicrucian Order had invented Freemasonry and only they knew the secret meaning of Masonic symbols. The Rosicrucian Order had been founded by Egyptian “Ormusse” or “Licht-Weise” who had emigrated to Scotland with the name “Builders from the East”. In 1785 and 1788 the Golden and Rosy Cross group published the *Geheime Figuren* or “The Secret Symbols of the 16th and 17th century Rosicrucians”.

Led by Johann Christoph von Wöllner and General Johann Rudolf von Bischoffwerder, the Masonic lodge (later: *Grand Lodge*) *Zu den drei Weltkugeln* (*The Three Globes*) was infiltrated and came under the influence of the Golden and Rosy Cross. Many Freemasons became Rosicrucianists and Rosicrucianism was established in many lodges. In 1782 at the Convent of Wilhelmsbad the *Alte schottische Loge Friedrich zum goldenen Löwen* (*Old Scottish Lodge Friedrich at the Golden Lion*) in Berlin strongly requested Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg and all other Freemasons to submit to the Golden and Rosy Cross, without success.

After 1782, this highly secretive society added Egyptian, Greek and Druidic mysteries to its alchemy system.^[18] A comparative study of what is known about the Gold and Rosenkreuzer appears to reveal, on the one hand, that it has influenced the creation of some modern Initiatic groups and, on the other hand, that the Nazis (see *The Occult Roots of Nazism*) may have been inspired by this German group.

According to the writings of the Masonic historian E.J. Marconis de Negre,^[19] who together with his father

Gabriel M. Marconis is held to be the founder of the “Rite of Memphis-Misraim” of Freemasonry, based on earlier conjectures (1784) by a Rosicrucian scholar Baron de Westerode^[20] and also promulgated by the 18th century secret society called the “Golden and Rosy Cross”, the Rosicrucian Order was created in the year 46 when an Alexandrian Gnostic sage named Ormus and his six followers were converted by one of Jesus' disciples, Mark. Their symbol was said to be a red cross surmounted by a rose, thus the designation of Rosy Cross. From this conversion, Rosicrucianism was supposedly born, by purifying Egyptian mysteries with the new higher teachings of early Christianity.^[21]

According to Maurice Magre (1877–1941) in his book *Magicians, Seers, and Mystics*, Rosenkreutz was the last descendant of the Germelshausen, a German family from the 13th century. Their castle stood in the Thuringian Forest on the border of Hesse, and they embraced Albigensian doctrines. The whole family was put to death by Landgrave Conrad of Thuringia, except for the youngest son, then five years old. He was carried away secretly by a monk, an Albigensian adept from Languedoc, and placed in a monastery under the influence of the Albigenses, where he was educated and met the four Brothers later to be associated with him in the founding of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. Magre's account supposedly derives from oral tradition.

Around 1530, more than eighty years before the publication of the first manifesto, the association of cross and rose already existed in Portugal in the Convent of the Order of Christ, home of the Knights Templar, later renamed Order of Christ. Three *bocetes* were, and still are, on the *abóboda* (vault) of the initiation room. The rose can clearly be seen at the center of the cross.^{[22][23]} At the same time, a minor writing by Paracelsus called *Prognosticatio Eximii Doctoris Paracelsi* (1530), containing 32 prophecies with allegorical pictures surrounded by enigmatic texts, makes reference to an image of a double cross over an open rose; this is one of the examples used to prove the “Fraternity of the Rose Cross” existed far earlier than 1614.^[24]

5 Modern groups

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, various groups styled themselves Rosicrucian. The diverse groups who link themselves to a “Rosicrucian Tradition” can be divided into three categories: Esoteric Christian Rosicrucian groups, which profess Christ; Masonic Rosicrucian groups such as *Societas Rosicruciana*; and initiatory groups such as the *Golden Dawn* and the *Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis* (AMORC).

Esoteric Christian Rosicrucian schools provide esoteric knowledge related to the inner teachings of Christianity.^[25]

- The Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1909/11. Teachings present the *mysteries*, in the form of esoteric knowledge, of which Christ spoke in Matthew 13:11 and Luke 8:10. The Fellowship seeks to prepare the individual through harmonious development of mind and heart in a spirit of unselfish service to mankind and an all-embracing altruism. According to it the Rosicrucian Order was founded in 1313^[26] and is composed of twelve exalted Beings gathered around a thirteenth, Christian Rosenkreuz. These great Adepts have already advanced far beyond the cycle of rebirth; their mission is to prepare the *whole wide world* for a new phase in religion—which includes awareness of the inner worlds and the subtle bodies, and to provide safe guidance in the gradual awakening of man's latent spiritual faculties during the next six centuries toward the coming Age of Aquarius.^[27]

According to Masonic writers, the Order of the Rose Cross is expounded in a major Christian literary work that molded the subsequent spiritual views of the western civilisation, *The Divine Comedy* (ca. 1308–1321) by Dante Alighieri.^{[28][29][30]}

Other Christian-Rosicrucian oriented bodies include:

- Lectorium Rosicrucianum, 1924
- Archeosophical Society, 1968

Freemasonic Rosicrucian bodies providing preparation either through direct study and/or through the practice of symbolic-initiatic journey.

- Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, 1801
- Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, 1866, in Scotia (SRIS; Scotland), in Civitatibus Foederatis (MSRICF/SRICF; United States) etc. This Masonic esoteric society reprinted the Rosicrucian manifestos in 1923. A well-known member was Arthur Edward Waite.

Initiatory groups which follow a degree system of study and initiation include:

- The Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC), incorporated in the U.S. in 1915
- Rosicrucian Order of the Golden Dawn, U.S. based Order, 2008
- The Order of the Hermetic Gold and Rose + Cross, established in the Philippines in 1930

6 Chronological list of groups formed for the study of Rosicrucianism and related subjects

Many of these groups generally speak of a lineal descent from earlier branches of the ancient Rosicrucian Order in England, France, Egypt, or other countries. However, some groups speak of a spiritual affiliation with a true and invisible Rosicrucian Order. Note there are other Rosicrucian groups not listed here. Some do not use the name "Rosicrucian" to name themselves. Some groups listed may have been dissolved and are no longer operating.

- Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross, 1750s
- Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, 1776
- Fraternitas Rosae Crucis, 1861
- Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA). ca. 1860–1865^[31]
- Societas Rosicruciana in America (SRIA), 1878^[31]
- Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis (SRICF), 1879^[31]
- Cabalistic Order of the Rosicrucian (Kabbalistique de la Rose Croix), 1888
- Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, 1888^[31]
- Rose Cross Order, 1889
- Order of the Temple & the Graal and of the Catholic Order of the Rose-Croix (l'Ordre de la Rose Croix Catholique et Esthetique, du Temple et du Graal) (CRC) ('Catholic', as in 'Universal'), 1890^[31]
- Alchemical Rose-Croix Society (Association Alchimique de France), 1896
- Rose-Croix de l'Orient (Rose-Cross of the East) (RCO) ?
- The Elder Brothers of the Rose-Croix (Les Frères Aînés de la Rose-Croix)
- Antiquus Arcanus Ordo Rosæ Rubæ Aureæ Crucis (AAORRAC) ?
- Ordo Aureæ & Rosæ Crucis (Antique Arcanæ Ordinis Rosæ Rubeæ et Aureæ Crucis)(OARC) ?
- Rosicrucian Fellowship (Association of Christian Mystics) 1909^[32]
- Anthroposophical Society, 1912
- Order of the Temple of the Rosy Cross, 1912^[31]
- Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, (AMORC), 1915^[33]

- Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, 1915
- Corona Fellowship of Rosicrucians (CFR), c. 1918^[31]
- Rosicrucian Order Crotona Fellowship, 1924
- Lectorium Rosicrucianum, 1924^[31]
- Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua (FRA), 1927
- The Saint Paul Rosicrucian Fellowship (Fraternidade Rosacruciana São Paulo), 1929
- The Order of the Hermetic Gold and The Rose + Cross (OHGRC), 1930^[34]
- The Order of the Hermetic Gold and Rose + Cross, established in the Philippines in 1930
- Fraternitas Rosicruciana Antiqua, 1932
- Archeosophical Society, 1968
- ConFraternity Rosae + Crucis (CR+C), 1989^[31]
- Ancient Rosae Crucis (ARC), ?^[31]
- Rosicrucian Order of the Golden Dawn, 2008
- The Knights of the Militia Crucifera Evangelica (KMCE), Alchemical Order dela Rosé-Croix^[35]

7 See also

- Anthroposophy
- Ashrama Hall and Christchurch Garden Theatre
- Behmenism
- Bogomilism
- Brethren of Purity
- Catharism
- Druzism
- Essenes
- Gnosticism
- Manichaeism
- Martinism
- Michał Sędziwój
- Neoplatonism
- Numerology
- Parabola Allegory
- Pythagoreanism
- Rosicrucian cipher
- Western esotericism
- Western Esotericism (academic field)

8 References

8.1 Footnotes

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- [4] “Review of The Origins of the Freemasonry: Scotland’s Century 1590–1710”. *Contra Mundum*. Retrieved 1 December 2009.
- [5] <http://www.nthposition.com/lususserius.php>
- [6] Gorceix, Bernard (1970), *La Bible des Rose-Croix*, Paris: a work of reference, containing translations of the three Rosicrucian Manifestos, recommended in *Accès de l’Ésoterisme Occidental* (1986, 1996) by Antoine Faivre (École Pratique des Hautes Études, Sorbonne)
- [7] Cf. Yates, Frances A. (1972), *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, London & Edighoffer, Roland (I-1982, II-1987), *Rose-Croix et Société Idéale selon Johann Valentin Andreae*, Paris
- [8] Cf. Dickson, Donald R. (1996), “Johann Valentin Andreae’s Utopian Brotherhoods”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 22 Dec. 1996
- [9] Cited by Sédir in *Les Rose-Croix*, Paris (1972), pp. 65–66
- [10] Sédir (1972), *Les Rose-Croix*, Paris, p. 59 to 68
- [11] Guénon, René, *Simboles de la Science Sacrée*, Paris 1962, p.95ff
- [12] Waite, Arthur E. (1887), *The Real History of the Rosicrucians – founded on their own Manifestos, and on facts and documents collected from the writings of Initiated Brethren*, London, p.408
- [13] “The origins of the Royal Society lie in an ‘invisible college’ of natural philosophers who began meeting in the mid-1640s to discuss the new philosophy of promoting knowledge of the natural world through observation and experiment, which we now call science.” <http://royalsociety.org/about-us/history> accessed 2 May 2014
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- [15] Cited by H. Lyons (1944) in *The Royal Society 1660–1940*, Cambridge
- [16] Jean-Pierre Bayard, *Les Rose-Croix*, M. A. Éditions, Paris, 1986
- [17] Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, p. 59

- [18] Bayard, Jean-Pierre, *Les Rose-Croix*, M.A.Édition, Paris 1986
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- [20] Nesta Webster's, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*, London, 1924, p. 87 and note 37
- [21] Further research in *Legend and Mythology: Ormus* by Sol, The Book of THoTH, 2004
- [22] Macedo, António de (2000), *Instruções Iniciáticas – Ensaios Espirituais*, 2nd edition, Hughin Editores, Lisbon, ISBN 972-8534-00-0, p.55
- [23] Gandra, J. Manuel (1998), *Portugal Misterioso (Os Templários)*, Lisbon, pp. 348–349
- [24] Stanislas de Guaita (1886), *Au seuil du Mystère*
- [25] Skogstrom, Jan (2001), Some Comparisons Between Exoteric & Esoteric Christianity, a table comparing exoteric and esoteric Christian beliefs
- [26] The Rosicrucian Interpretation of Christianity by The Rosicrucian Fellowship
- [27] *The Rosicrucian Mysteries* by Max Heindel. Accessed 29 March 2006
- [28] Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, “XXX: Knight Kadosh”, p. 822, 1872
- [29] René Guénon, *El Esoterismo de Dante*, pp. 5–6, 14, 15–16, 18–23, 1925
- [30] Manly Palmer Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages: The Fraternity of The Rose Cross*, p. 139, 1928
- [31] Frater Melchior. “Manifestations of the Neo-Rosicrucian Current”
- [32] 8 August 1909, in Seattle, Washington, at 3:00 p.m; cf. http://mount_ecclesia.tripod.com/chronology_about_max_heindel.htm
- [33] Not 1909: a Charter forming this organization is dated from 1 April 1915 in New York, after a previous document titled “American Pronunziamento Number One” or “First American Manifesto” by H. Spencer Lewis issued in February, 1915; cf. <http://www.parareligion.ch/sunrise/vanloo/ameng.htm>
- [34] cf. <http://www.rosecrossohgrc.com>
- [35] cf. <http://www.knightsofmceglobal.com>

8.2 Bibliography

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